

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel) on Friday introduced legislation that would create a separate funding source for the Big Sur portion of the Los Padres National Forest and add portions of five local rivers to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

"Some of our most important resources in California are our green spaces: our parks, our forests and our rivers," Rep. Farr said following introduction of the bill, the Big Sur Forest Service Management Unit Act (H.R. 4040). "The forests and coastline of Big Sur and the rivers along the Central Coast are known worldwide as place of amazing beauty, but it will take effort by all of us to maintain that beauty. This bill will protect sensitive rivers and put control in local hands, right where it should be."

The legislation would

- Create the Big Sur Management Unit, a division of the Los Padres National Forest, with its own source of funding;
- Add portions of five Central Coast rivers to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (Arroyo Seco River, Big Creek, Carmel River, San Antonio River and San Carpoforo Creek);
- Add 2,287 acres to the Ventana Wilderness and adjusts some boundary areas;
- Create a Wildland Urban Interface Special Study Area for use in demonstrating fire prevention methods.
- Establish the Arroyo Seco-Indians National Recreational Trail and the 65-acre Jeff Norman Botanical Area.

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was created by Congress in 1968. Its mission is to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Wild and Scenic status prevents any dam or other major development in the designated waterway. Since the segments designated in this bill all flow through Forest Service wilderness lands, such development is already prohibited by federal law. However, Wild and Scenic River status would also require the Forest Service to manage the adjacent riparian corridor to enhance the designated stream's outstanding scenic, recreational, historic/cultural, wildlife and other similar values.

California state law would continue to govern any downstream water rights. The designations do not confer any federal authority over the use of private land or local zoning adjacent to or downstream from designated segments.

“This legislation will provide permanent protection for the last free flowing wild rivers in the Ventana Region and implement other safeguards to protect these public wild lands and rivers for future generations. We all thank Congressman Sam Farr for his visionary leadership to protect the Big Sur Coast and Ventana backcountry,” said Tom Hopkins, president of the Ventana Wilderness Alliance.

Samuel Goldman, the California wilderness coordinator for the Wilderness Society, added: “The Wilderness Society and the California Wild Heritage Campaign are thrilled that once again Congressman Farr has stepped up to demonstrate that he continues to be one of Congress's biggest champions for river and public land protections.”

For more information about this legislation and maps of the affected areas, visit <http://www.farr.house.gov/bigsurforest>

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